Johnson Pham

9/9/10

AP US History

Social Darwinism

**Social Darwinism** is a belief which states that the strongest or fittest should survive and flourish in society, while the weak and unfit should be allowed to die. The theory was chiefly expounded by Herbert Spencer, whose ethical philosophies always held an elitist view and received a boost from the application of Darwinian ideas such as adaptation and natural selection. -From: library.thinkquest.org

Social Darwinism, term coined in the late 19th century to describe the idea that humans, like animals and plants, compete in a struggle for existence in which natural selection results in “survival of the fittest.” Social Darwinists base their beliefs on theories of evolution developed by British naturalist Charles Darwin. Some social Darwinists argue that governments should not interfere with human competition by attempting to regulate the economy or cure social ills such as poverty. Instead, they advocate a laissez-faire political and economic system that favors competition and self-interest in social and business affairs. Social Darwinists typically deny that they advocate a “law of the jungle.” But most propose arguments that justify imbalances of power between individuals, races, and nations because they consider some people more fit to survive than others.

The term *social Darwinist* is applied loosely to anyone who sees human society primarily in terms of struggle, competition, or natural law. Many people believe that the concept of social Darwinism explains the philosophical rationalization behind racism, imperialism, and capitalism. The term has negative implications for most people because they consider it a rejection of compassion and social responsibility.

**Adapted from:**  
Robert C. Bannister, B.A., M.A., Ph.D. - Social Darwinism," Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2008

1) What is Social Darwinism?

Social Darwinism is the belief that states that the idea of "survival of the fittest" should flourish in society and the weak and unfit should be allowed to die.

2) How can we apply social Darwinism to the arrival of Spanish Conquistadores in the New World?

When the Spanish Conquistadores came to the New World they probably believed that idea too, they were the ones who were more fit and strongest (they had immunity against diseases and they defeated any tribes that opposed them), while the native tribes in the New World were the ones that were unfit and weak (likely to die from diseases and were defeated by the Spanish Conquistadores).

3) Are you a social Darwinist? Why or why not?

(How I see it)- As seen in the history of America, the weak were crushed, the native tribes that lived here were defeated, by the stronger which were the Europeans that came here for different reasons.

(My opinions)- I think the world does rule (with a few exceptions, I’ll talk about this later), by the belif of Social Darwinism this applies more to the world (except for some with the humans), more to animals, plants, etc.

Capitalism- an economic system in which investment in and ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange of wealth is made and maintained chiefly by private individuals or corporations, esp. as contrasted to cooperatively or state-owned means of wealth.

(This is from the term social Darwinist, from the 3rd paragraph, ignore this) This is a really tough question (I mean it) but I think yes, because humans are constantly in terms with struggle, competition, and natural law. Some examples of struggle are right now, people are struggling for money and they struggle with what life has to give, even in school. Some in competition are with jobs, fighting each for job positions and sometimes with love, etc. (trivial- a bargain on some stuff, and people wanting to buy them). Some examples in natural law are is that human behaviors do come from their nature (or someone they look up to) and they can copy animal's behaviors (kids may watch some animals and then behave like this).